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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 83: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/47/340, A/47/375-S/24429, A/47/391, A/47/499, A/47/564)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/47/419 and Add.1-3)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued) (A/47/340; E/1992/28)

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(d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued) (A/47/264-E/1992/71; E/1992/29)

(e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued)

1. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) said that the report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system (A/47/419) shed little light on the progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. The report emphasized vague common characteristics and did not contain any of the observations elicited from the questionnaires or field missions. Future reports might analyse the situations in different regions of the world and in different agencies, bearing in mind the key provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211.

2. The triennial review process should reaffirm the principles set out in resolution 44/211. Notwithstanding the obvious connection between the restructuring of the Secretariat and the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee's discussion of the triennial review should respect the negotiations under way in the relevant forums and avoid issues not covered in resolution 44/211, such as functions of resident coordinators which were unrelated to technical cooperation or new funding mechanisms.

3. The Committee should focus on the specific modalities for implementing the guidelines on national execution and the programme approach, bearing in mind the agreements reached by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at its thirty-ninth session. However, it would be premature at the current stage to modify the new support cost arrangements. Moreover, undue rigidity should be avoided in operational activities: since situations in the developing countries varied widely, clear objectives and flexible means to achieve them were essential.

4. His delegation in principle welcomed the report's proposals for a unified country programme approach to technical cooperation, which would enhance the decision-making capacity of Governments. It also agreed that training was the key to the success of national execution, and that emphasis should be placed on cost-effective training at the regional and subregional levels. The programme approach would require a significant enhancement of the technical

(Mr. Jaramillo, Colombia)

expertise of United Nations experts sent to the field. There was also a need for substantially improved financial audit, management audit and impact assessment.

5. Lastly, he welcomed the high quality of the report on operational activities in the field of science and technology (A/47/419/Add.1) and expressed the hope that agreement could be reached on specific recommendations to optimize the resources of the United Nations system in that sphere.

6. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) said that the difficulties which Member States and the organizations of the United Nations development system had encountered with respect to the resident coordinator system, the programme approach, national execution and decentralization could be attributed to different interpretations of those concepts and to the inadequate implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. Nevertheless, the Committee should continue to reaffirm the validity of that resolution. He hoped that the discussion of the Secretary-General's report on operational activities (A/47/419) would result in practical solutions to those problems and welcomed the field perspective it presented and its valuable recommendations for the successful implementation of the resolution in question.

7. His delegation fully supported the proposal for a country strategy note and agreed that the programme approach concept must be further clarified. The efforts of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy and the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ(OPS)) to provide system-wide definitions, guidelines and principles were welcome in that regard. At the country level, the programme approach must be primarily a nationally managed effort.

8. His delegation supported the role of the resident coordinators, who should receive the necessary policy, technical and financial support, particularly from agency headquarters. Accordingly, serious consideration should be given to the proposal to make additional funding available to the resident coordinators to finance consultants and support staff.

9. One main purpose of decentralization should be to streamline the decision-making process, particularly with regard to programme and project formulation, approval and implementation. However, effective decentralization required a favourable environment.

10. United Nations efforts to enable the developing countries to enhance their capabilities in science and technology were of key importance, and his delegation welcomed the special attention devoted to that issue in document A/47/419/Add.1. He agreed that the discussion of science and technology policies in international forums must be rendered more effective. At the country level, the operational activities of the United Nations system should contribute to a specific national agenda and should strive for technological relevance rather than technological excellence.

(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

11. His delegation welcomed the reform and restructuring methods adopted by UNDP to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211. The Programme's comparative advantage lay in its commitment to the principles of neutrality, universality and complementarity, and his delegation supported its coordinating role in operational activities, particularly in the field of human development. UNDP and the other members of the United Nations development system should carry out their operational activities bearing in mind such recent developments as the consensus reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the current efforts to revitalize the activities of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

12. Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that those delegations wished to associate themselves with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77.

13. Although such factors as the adoption of Agenda 21 and the ongoing restructuring and revitalization of the activities of the United Nations in the economic and social sectors must be taken into account, the legislative framework for the discussion of the triennial policy review of operational activities must remain General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 46/219. The development challenge facing the countries of the South required a comprehensive and integrated approach to their development needs. In addition, environment and development strategies must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development on a global scale, an objective that was fundamental for the survival of mankind. Full implementation of Agenda 21 by both the North and the South would place a heavier financial burden on developing countries, underscoring the urgency of reaching the internationally agreed targets for official development assistance (ODA).

14. The CARICOM countries attached great importance to multilateral support for development and used the United Nations system in areas in which multilateralism had a comparative advantage. In the light of their past experience, they were convinced that the fundamental principles elaborated in the consensus of 1970 remained valid. However, efforts must be made to improve the predictability of resources so that the United Nations system could respond to the South's increasing development needs more effectively.

15. The States members of CARICOM regretted that document A/46/219 had not been available earlier to facilitate preparation for the triennial policy review, although they understood the difficulties which had caused the delay.

16. The new focus on human development in the United Nations system would have a positive impact on future programmes and bring tangible benefits to developing countries. He therefore looked forward to further discussion of the linkage of human development with the proposed world summit for social development.

(Mr. King, Trinidad and Tobago)

17. Further encouragement must be given to the elaboration of a system-wide consensus on a programme approach and the harmonization of the programme cycles of all funding agencies with the planning periods of national Governments, where feasible. The simplification of rules and procedures relating to accounting and project formulation, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation would also remove a significant obstacle to the utilization of national capacities.

18. In the context of national execution, although it had been recognized that the United Nations system would have to be given a sharper technical focus, it had not been anticipated that that reorientation would lead to an erosion of the technical capacity of the specialized agencies. The technical support of those agencies must continue to figure prominently in operational activities through a tripartite relationship with Governments and funding bodies. The CARICOM countries also agreed with the views on flexibility and national execution expressed in paragraph 154 of document A/47/419.

19. The States members of CARICOM had taken note of the proposals to improve the resident coordinator system (A/47/419, para. 140). An alternative might be to conduct a comprehensive review of the system, taking into account the role of the lead agency in individual country programmes. The members of the United Nations system should strive for further progress in the establishment of common premises where feasible, without any additional costs to developing countries. A country-by-country review would be desirable. Procurement from developing countries must also be substantially increased. The utilization of national capacities should contribute to that process.

20. Access to science and technology was one of the most important factors in bridging the development gap between the North and the South. He supported the elaboration of a policy on the ownership of intellectual property developed in projects financed by the United Nations with the cooperation of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

21. Mr. SIEBER (Observer for Switzerland) said that despite the difficulties generated by rapidly changing political and economic circumstances, and the stagnation of resources available for development assistance, notable improvements had been made by many members of the United Nations development system in enhancing the effectiveness of their operational activities. However, progress had been much slower from the inter-agency perspective. The system must therefore concentrate its operational activities on areas where it possessed clear comparative advantages and further improve the coherence of its programmes, with greater emphasis on the promotion of socially equitable and sustainable development, policy advice and capacity-building.

22. His delegation appreciated the frankness of a number of the assessments contained in document A/47/419. It fully agreed on the need for an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to development cooperation and welcomed

(Mr. Sieber, Observer, Switzerland)

the emphasis on human development. General Assembly resolution 44/211 remained a valid guideline for further improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the system's operational activities. However, the absence of any substantive reference in the report to Agenda 21 and the potential role of the operational activities of the United Nations in its implementation was unfortunate.

23. His delegation was pleased to note that the need for common country strategies was no longer seriously disputed and that CCSQ (OPS) had recently agreed on basic principles for their elaboration. The concept should now be implemented in countries which were ready to collaborate in such an undertaking, the most likely candidates being those for which the United Nations system had developed a country profile or in which National Technical Cooperation Assessments and Programmes (NATCAPs) or other comprehensive needs assessments had taken place. The application of the country strategies should be closely monitored and evaluated.

24. The Secretary-General also should report regularly on progress made in the implementation of the programme approach. There was a real need for programme auditing in addition to financial auditing, in order to focus on programme outputs and their sustainability. Suitable programme indicators would have to be developed for that purpose. Although encouraging progress had been made in strengthening the resident coordinator system and establishing United Nations country teams, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) must find a workable solution to the remaining difficulties without delay.

25. His delegation strongly favoured the development of a comprehensive and coordinated United Nations training strategy for operational activities. The pilot seminars on management of field collaboration organized by the International Labour Organisation's International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training at Turin had proved valuable, and should be expanded and complemented by other system-wide courses.

26. Mr. KUDRYAVTSEV (Russian Federation) said that the reforms of operational activities of the United Nations system should be based on consensus and the practical needs of all countries. Particularly important was the new procedure for interaction and coordination between headquarters and the field. In that regard, the establishment of common premises - provided the necessary conditions were met - seemed useful. In order to improve coordination, greater use should be made of the NATCAP exercise and round-table meetings. The promotion and improvement of an "integrated response" was not an end in itself but a means of enhancing the effectiveness of work in the field; in that area as well, the interests and specific nature of the activities of all interested organizations must be taken fully into account. The proposal made by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on United Nations strategy at the country level, as well as the idea of establishing an international development council were of practical interest.

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

27. The decisions of the UNDP Governing Council and the Executive Board of UNICEF on the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Central and Eastern Europe provided a good basis for consideration of the problems of the countries in transition and the kinds of assistance that could be provided by the operational activities of the United Nations system, on the understanding that the interests of the developing countries should not be jeopardized. While his delegation recognized that UNDP, UNICEF and other agencies should continue to focus their activities on the needs of the developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, the time had come to adopt a truly universal approach and make greater use of opportunities for multilateral technical cooperation to support countries making the transition to a market economy.

28. The proposals on the harmonization of multilateral technical assistance with national development programmes, the wider application of the national execution modality, greater use of the programme approach rather than a project approach, and the synchronization of the programming cycles of all the funding agencies of the United Nations system with national social and economic development programmes were interesting and balanced.

29. The operational activities of the United Nations system required adequate, guaranteed and stable financing. Participation in operational activities and multilateral technical cooperation should be voluntary, which presupposed the voluntary nature of contributions for the implementation of such activities. Joint financing with the equal participation of donors and recipients, including the establishment of additional voluntary and special funds on the basis of special-purpose contributions, might also be considered, together with the possibility of obtaining resources from interested non-governmental organizations and private businesses.

30. Efforts to introduce a human and environmental dimension into multilateral technical cooperation were also welcome. The relevant indicators should be taken into account in the preparation of multilateral development programmes.

31. The Russian Federation attached great importance to expanding its cooperation with UNDP, particularly in the field of technical and advisory support for its market reforms. A new stage in the Russian Federation's cooperation with UNDP had begun in September 1992, during negotiations with the Programme Administrator in Moscow. Practical measures were being taken to increase the participation of interested Russian organizations, including non-governmental organizations, in the implementation of UNDP-sponsored programmes and projects. The recently established Russian Agency for International Cooperation and Development should be an important stimulus for broadening cooperation between Russia and UNDP.

32. Russia greatly appreciated the activities undertaken by UNICEF to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Children. In January 1992, President Boris Yeltsin had signed the World Declaration on the Survival,

(Mr. Kudryavtsev, Russian Federation)

Protection and Development of Children. A landmark event in the Russian Federation's efforts to protect children and mothers had been the adoption, in June 1992, of a presidential decree on immediate measures to implement the Declaration, as well as the federal programmes "Children of Russia" and "Children of Chernobyl". His delegation welcomed the significant contribution of UNICEF to the implementation of multilateral emergency operations and its humanitarian aid to children in especially difficult circumstances. In recognition of the valuable activities of UNICEF in the Russian Federation, the Fund's Executive Director had been awarded the Tolstoy Medal.

33. Mr. MBENNA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77.

34. On the issue of coordination and management of operational activities, his delegation welcomed the efforts under way to give recipient Governments a leading role in the national execution of country programmes and projects. However, those Governments must be involved in the formulation of such programmes if they were to implement them effectively. The role of the United Nations system was to provide recipient Governments with whatever support and resources they requested or needed so that they would be better able to play the coordinating role expected of them.

35. In executing national programmes, top priority should be given to making optimum use of indigenous institutions, experience and expertise along with the experience and expertise of the United Nations system. That would permit a linkage to be established between the training of local experts and their deployment and would build and consolidate national capacities.

36. The scope of proposals on the transfer of science and technology for development needed to be enlarged. Indigenous technologies could not be ignored or left unutilized. The United Nations system might initiate collaborative arrangements which would ensure that locally developed technologies were incorporated in national programmes and attracted the necessary demand at the national as well as the regional and subregional levels, particularly in the developing countries.

37. Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICHL (Austria) said that the sweeping political changes of the past several years had opened up new vistas of cooperation but had also, paradoxically, caused the countries with economies in transition to become recipient countries. While the legitimate needs of those countries should not be met at the expense of developing countries, the principle of universality should continue to guide multilateral development cooperation.

38. Austria agreed that the United Nations system needed to be reformed and revitalized in the economic, social and related fields in order to meet the challenges of the 1990s and beyond and shared the view that the current triennial policy review could and should make a serious contribution to

(Ms. Freudenschuss-Reichl, Austria)

improving the effectiveness of the United Nations operational activities. In carrying out the review, the Committee should be guided by the important agreements reached at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

39. General Assembly resolution 44/211 still constituted the basic framework for further enhancing of the functioning of the United Nations system's operational activities. The triennial review should therefore concentrate on elaborating clear guidelines for the implementation of the principles set out in that resolution and on remedial action to overcome current shortcomings. Attention should be focused primarily on the situation in the field. Austria felt strongly about a unified United Nations presence and the establishment of common premises; it welcomed the establishment of common premises in some 20 countries and urged the organizations comprising the Joint Consultative Group on Policy to increase that number.

40. The role of the resident coordinator should be strengthened, and clear assignments of responsibility and lines of reporting should be established. She welcomed the agreement reached in ACC on principles for a United Nations common country strategy. Such agreement should enable the bodies of the United Nations system to work together in developing an integrated United Nations response to national strategies and to divide up the tasks rationally, on the basis of organizations' comparative advantages.

41. National execution should be favoured wherever feasible and the Secretary-General's call for a major effort in the area of capacity-building should be heeded; in that regard, UNDP had a particular role to play.

42. Austria deplored the lack of clarity which characterized the support cost successor arrangements: it created a climate of insecurity and undermined confidence in United Nations operational activities. However, her delegation welcomed all efforts aimed at coordinating operational activities more effectively. In the Economic and Social Council, it had expressed support for the Nordic proposal to improve governance by allocating an international development council function to the Council.

43. Another area of importance to her delegation was relief, reconstruction and development, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 46/182. The interrelationship of relief efforts and development assistance was a crucial one. Finally, her delegation attached particular importance to the concept of human development, which must be the focus of the Organization's endeavours if development cooperation was to fulfil its goal of service to mankind.

44. Mr. BAHADIAN (Brazil) said that the triennial policy review must result in appropriate policy guidance for the United Nations system so that operational activities could support the development efforts of the developing countries more effectively. It could be concluded from the

(Mr. Bahadian, Brazil)

Secretary-General's report (A/47/419), that uneven progress had been achieved in the three years since General Assembly resolution 44/211 had been adopted, although the process seemed essentially to be moving in the right direction.

45. Further guidance was required in the closely interrelated areas of programming and strengthening of the resident coordinator system. The country strategy note called for in resolution 44/211 provided a broad framework in which the needs and priorities of the recipient country were outlined and under which the individual responses of the system's agencies, funds and programmes would be coordinated. The country strategy note must help to enhance individual programmes and not restrict the valuable assistance and technical cooperation provided by organizations under their own specific mandates. Such restrictions would irreparably damage the capacity of the different parts of the system to assist recipient countries with expertise and innovative initiatives in their spheres of activity. In the context of the country strategy note, the resident coordinator must be viewed as a team leader having a global perspective from which to give the necessary impetus to individual team members in the achievement of the country's objectives.

46. Proposals to expand such a role unduly in order to give a single United Nations country representative global responsibility for all operational activities within the country were alarming. The Group of 77 had already stated that such expanded functions would create insurmountable legal and political difficulties. Even if the resident coordinator's role was expanded only to that of representative for all operational activities, difficulties similar to those arising in the case of individual country programmes would result, particularly as the resident coordinator's workload was already high. In any case, the guidelines recently approved by ACC on the subject seemed to strike an appropriate balance between the need for increased coordination and the risks of excessive centralization.

47. The calls for a centralized international development council at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council's most recent session would run counter to both the spirit and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which called for greater decentralization. The paradox of having a consensus on the need for decentralization together with proposals that reinforced centralizing tendencies pervaded the discussion of operational activities; his delegation believed that the agreed goal of decentralization must prevail.

48. With respect to resources for operational activities, the Nordic proposal to reform the structure of contributions to the programmes and funds involved in operational activities and to provide financing for operational activities on a stable and assured basis deserved the Committee's consideration, although his delegation doubted the effectiveness of the specific measures proposed to achieve those goals. For example, the implementation of assessed contributions to finance operational activities gave the impression that developing countries did not contribute in any way whatsoever to such

(Mr. Bahadian, Brazil)

activities. They did contribute, inter alia, through expenses covered by the regular budget and the internal mobilization of human, material and financial resources for project execution. Furthermore, assessed contributions would tend to erode the principle of the voluntary and grant nature of resources for operational activities. Such proposals tended to mask the real difficulty in the financing of operational activities, which was the lack of political will. A simpler and more equitable solution would lie in a renewed commitment by countries that had not yet done so to attain the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) for ODA.

49. The assistance provided by the United Nations system for human development should not be limited to palliative or emergency assistance, but must continue to focus on promoting development and the transfer of skills. Given the increasingly vital role of science and technology in development efforts, the United Nations system should address the issue in a manner befitting its importance. In that connection, his delegation envisaged a leading role for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in providing a system-wide focus and impetus in that crucial field.

50. Mr. RYSINSKI (Poland) said that the Committee had an exceptional opportunity to influence the course of reform of the United Nations development system and thereby strengthen international economic cooperation. First of all, a convenient confluence of opportunities and necessities had appeared which in turn had been underpinned by imaginative ideas for enhancing the delivery of the United Nations technical assistance. Secondly, current efforts to restructure the economic and social sectors of the United Nations and the institutional follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development showed promise for the rejuvenation and remodelling of the United Nations system. Thirdly, the universal nature of operational activities was being overwhelmingly acknowledged. As a country with an economy in transition, Poland recognized the significance of that fact and its practical implications, and would consider recommending the espousal of such concepts as economic and technical cooperation among countries in transition.

51. What was most important, however, was for the needs and concerns of countries in transition to be taken into account in the resolution to be adopted on the triennial policy review. He was therefore pleased to note that his delegation had reached an understanding on the issue with the coordinators of the Group of 77 during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

52. The debate so far had stressed the need for operational activities to be geared to field activities, for a unified United Nations presence and approach at the country level, and for headquarters to serve the delivery of services in the field at the national and regional levels. Such decentralization would entail a considerable transfer of activities and responsibilities from headquarters to the field and necessitate a strengthening of the resident coordinator's role. At the same time, consolidation of the different country

(Mr. Rysinski, Poland)

programmes and field structures should not preclude a diversity of responses and approaches by development agencies to the technical support problems of different countries. Unity within diversity should best serve the purposes of a renewed United Nations field presence.

53. A parallel process of consolidation and strengthened coordination should be pursued at the intergovernmental level. The Economic and Social Council might serve as the focal point for central policy guidance in that respect.

54. Another area of concern was the financing of operational activities, especially at a time of slower growth or recession in many parts of the world economy. Poland had consistently put on record its support for a voluntary scheme of pledges. Aware of the limitations of that practice, it would consider supplementing such funds by encouraging a steady flow of contributions from the business community and from non-governmental organizations. Poland also believed that cost-sharing and contributions in kind should not be disregarded as substantial forms of contribution; in that connection, the Nordic proposal to combine voluntary contributions with assessed and negotiated pledges deserved further consideration.

55. His delegation hoped that a suitable solution would be found to the problem of ensuring more direct participation by the countries in transition in the operations of the United Nations development system. The tasks facing the Committee in the operational sector could only be addressed through a partnership involving longstanding commitments for sustainable cooperation. In a rapidly changing world, the development system was in a position to offer change based on continuity.

56. Mr. Guerrero (Philippines), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

57. Ms. CAPELING-ALAKIJA (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that much of the work of UNIFEM focused on ways of linking women at the grass-roots level with the macro-policy-making that shaped their future. UNIFEM endeavoured to give direct support to small, but creative, women's initiatives with potential for demonstrating effective developmental alternatives, and to promote innovative programmes that could lead to a policy environment that encouraged women's participation at all levels. The Fund sought to help policy-makers gain a better understanding of how their decisions affected the lives of grass-roots women, and to assist grass-roots women in acquiring the skills, experience and confidence they needed to negotiate a better deal for themselves.

58. At the global level, there was a constituency of concerned women that could be mobilized to support the values of peace, equality and justice. Often, the concerns of that constituency were not adequately reflected in United Nations decisions and operations. The General Assembly resolution convening the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had made no reference to women whatsoever, and women all over the world had

(Ms. Capeling-Alakija)

rallied to influence the course of events. Often with the help of concerned men, women had lobbied to take part in the preparatory process for the Conference and to include women's concerns in its agenda. The result was that women's concerns were integrated into Agenda 21. The Agenda 21 recommendations for education and training in most sectoral areas would, if carried out, increase women's opportunities.

59. During the current session, the General Assembly would take decisions on the establishment of new institutions to monitor the implementation of the commitments made by Governments at the Rio Conference. In order for Agenda 21 to have a real impact on people's lives, there was a need for broader participation of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, new financial resources, the redeployment of current resources, and accountability on the issue of gender balance. Women must have the same opportunities as men to serve on the Commission for Sustainable Development and the proposed high-level advisory body, and to hold senior positions in the Commission's permanent secretariat.

60. Mr. YEGOROV (Belarus) said that his delegation strongly supported the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system (A/47/419), the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNICEF on improving coordination of multilateral technical assistance with the national development programmes of recipient countries. The adequate and stable financing of operational activities of the United Nations system was essential. While participation in the financing of operational activities should remain voluntary, that did not rule out the possibility of considering proposals on the joint financing of specific projects by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and donor and recipient countries.

61. It might be useful to establish additional funds on the basis of special-purpose contributions from various sources. Before such funds were established, it would be necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the social and economic situation in the recipient country concerned, and to assess the comparative advantages of the various international agencies, regional organizations and bilateral donors in order to ensure optimum complementarity and an effective division of labour among all organizations and countries providing assistance.

62. An obvious advantage of the operational activities of the United Nations system was their relatively reliable network of field offices headed by UNDP resident coordinators. The bodies, agencies and programmes of the United Nations system should make concerted efforts to strengthen that network so that the Organization's collective experience and resources were used in the best way possible and had an economic and social impact on countries receiving technical assistance. That network and the entire system of social and economic activities should be equipped with a mechanism for detecting crises as they arose, and ensuring that timely measures were taken to prevent them from worsening.

(Mr. Yegorov, Belarus)

63. Belarus had welcomed the UNDP Governing Council's decision to grant it recipient-country status within UNDP. His delegation agreed with the European Community and its member States that the integrated response of the United Nations system to national development strategies, based on a rational division of labour within and among financing bodies and specialized agencies, should be implemented without delay in the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. A new stage in cooperation between the countries of that region and the United Nations system of technical assistance had begun. Such cooperation called for completely new and innovative methods.

64. Belarus had signed and ratified the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children. In implementing the provisions concerning children in especially difficult circumstances, in particular those who had been subjected to atomic radiation, the Parliament of Belarus had approved a national programme, entitled "Children of Chernobyl". International and charitable organizations, cities and communes, business circles and individual citizens were providing valuable assistance to Belarus in carrying out its national programme. Belarus also appreciated the assistance provided by UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), which had resulted in a report on the situation of women and children in the country. Such efforts should be coordinated with the efforts of the international community to implement the decisions of the World Summit for Children at the global and national levels. The UNICEF secretariat should assist Belarus in preparing a comprehensive national plan of action to assist women and children affected by the Chernobyl disaster.

65. Mr. FORBES-WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the responsibilities of FAO were particularly acute in a world where over 60 per cent of the population of the developing countries pursued rural occupations and where malnutrition and hunger were widespread. FAO had paid close attention to the main elements of the triennial policy review of operational activities and follow-up to General Assembly resolution 44/211 and had acted on those recommendations, as well as on its own similar 1989 review recommendations. FAO had played an active role in developing the programme approach, common strategies and guidelines for better field coordination in conjunction with CCSQ (OPS).

66. The follow-up to resolution 44/211 was less disappointing than the documentation might suggest, but it had taken place at a time of greatly restricted resources for agencies such as FAO, which meant that the margin for change was very narrow. Decentralization was one area that had been affected. While FAO endorsed that goal, its efforts to decentralize its field operations had been hampered by the agency's financial situation.

67. It was important that the UNDP support cost success or arrangements, which were a major policy thrust of resolution 44/211, should be effectively implemented. Yet, contrary to the original intentions, FAO and other agencies had been assigned only a marginal role under those arrangements, even where

(Mr. Forbes-Watt, FAO)

the provision of technical support services to projects under national execution was concerned. Available capacities in FAO and other agencies were not being mobilized, thereby depriving the developing countries of vital technical assistance and policy advice. The urgent need to accelerate the full application of the new support cost arrangements had been carefully considered at the recent session of ACC. The issue was of great concern to all the specialized and technical agencies, and should be addressed in the Second Committee's resolution on operational activities. It was also of interest to donors, in view of the need for complementarity and appropriate division of labour, as well as to the developing countries, whose continuing access to the system's technical know-how and neutral policy advice and assistance must be ensured. Constant monitoring and reporting would be required to ensure that the objectives of those arrangements were fully achieved and that the tripartite relationship was strengthened rather than abandoned.

68. Mr. BAHR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO fully supported the statement by FAO, an organization with which it cooperated closely. UNESCO had worked hard to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211 at the country level. Elements such as the resident coordinator and the single country office were means of ensuring the success of national execution and the programme approach. National execution required national empowerment, which in turn required national capacity. UNESCO had worked together with other agencies and Governments at developing such capacity in some 10 countries, through the elaboration of upstream policy as well as national action plans and human resources investment programmes.

69. The mandates of the specialized agencies were complementary; where there were competing interpretations, mandates must be made mutually supportive. The governing bodies of the non-funding specialized agencies must consult closely with those of the funding agencies in order to achieve complementarity in their operational activities for development. Such activities were an integral part of the mandate and activities of UNESCO. The organization's substantive activities would suffer in relevance and in quality if separated from operational activities. For many years, the States members of UNESCO had urged an integration of those activities into coherent agency programmes.

70. Several speakers had emphasized the importance of strengthening, rather than eroding, the development role and capacity of the specialized agencies. Concentrating reform efforts primarily on the funding agencies while deferring the question of how non-funding, specialized agencies could participate in those efforts might lead to a dual development system, which could seriously weaken the effectiveness of the system as a whole. Existing mechanisms for cooperation and the interlinkage of governing bodies within the United Nations system had been designed at a time when the current challenges had not existed. The previous week's meeting of ACC had addressed those issues, and a large majority of that Committee's members had concluded that the current

(Mr. Bahr, UNESCO)

system of development financing linked to the implementation of resolution 44/211 threatened to impair the ability of specialized agencies to provide technical assistance to developing countries and that a review of that process would be needed in 1993.

71. UNESCO agreed that the implementation of resolution 44/211 was slow and unequal to the magnitude of the development task. However, hasty action could be disruptive rather than constructive. Efforts to promote the programme approach and national execution should be pursued, as should more coherent and cost-effective action by the United Nations and its constituent agencies. Improved inter-agency cooperation and consultation should be a transparent process which would greatly enhance the effectiveness of development at the country level, thereby ensuring better use of donor resources.

72. Mr. SINGH (Fiji) said that the Secretary-General's report on the triennial policy review included useful information on the methodology adopted in assessing progress in the implementation of the guidelines set out in General Assembly resolution 46/219. Regular feedback on the effectiveness of United Nations services should be continued.

73. United Nations operational activities should reflect the changing times and adapt to those changes, since such activities were the only practical means of implementing the various mandates of the United Nations. He welcomed the improved delivery of services by United Nations agencies and commended UNDP for the important steps it had taken to implement resolution 44/211, in particular, those relating to support cost successor arrangements, national execution and the programme approach.

74. Rather than merely identifying areas on which the next triennial review should focus, realistic quantitative and qualitative targets should also be set. Some indication should be given as to the organizations that would have the major responsibility for particular initiatives or tasks and the time-frame within which specific objectives should be achieved. Confusion regarding the programme approach and decentralization needed to be resolved rapidly. UNDP had, commendably, circulated notes on guiding principles for the programme approach, which was much preferable to the project approach. Practical steps needed to be taken to ensure that the programme approach was made fully operational in the wide variety of circumstances prevailing in the developing countries.

75. Resident coordinators must have clear coordinating authority and expanded approval capacity for all United Nations agencies at the country level. They should be given full responsibility for ensuring complementarity and a common approach to meeting the needs of developing countries. Most developing countries had recently been moving away from five-year development plans towards more flexible policy strategy documents to guide their development process. The proposed country strategy notes, to be prepared by resident

(Mr. Singh, Fiji)

coordinators, should focus on areas where the Organization could make a significant contribution to national development priorities and efforts, and should identify areas where joint efforts might be necessary.

76. His delegation fully supported national execution of United Nations-funded projects, but felt that national execution should be preceded by an adequate build-up of national capacities to take over project responsibilities once United Nations assistance had been phased out. Training should therefore be given the highest priority. He welcomed the efforts being made to synchronize all programming cycles of the United Nations funds and programmes with national requirements. Establishing common premises at the country level would greatly assist in the move towards synchronizing programming cycles.

77. Finally, he reiterated his delegation's strong support for the triennial review of operational activities, which had achieved its purpose and which ought to be followed up in order to meet the changing needs of developing countries more fully, eliminate duplication and reduce costs while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations development assistance.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.